

What is Man?

Study Guide

LESSON
THREE

THE CURSE OF SIN



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

“Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God”
(*Westminster Confession of Faith*, question 14).

II. Origin (2:01)

A. Human Race (2:46)

Adam and Eve were created sinless.

To continue in God's covenant blessings and avoid covenant curses, they needed to remain loyal to the terms of God's covenant (Genesis 1–2):

- Covenant obligations:
 - Fill the earth with human beings
 - Cultivate the world and make it fit for God's presence
 - Rule over the other creatures
 - Work and take care of the Garden of Eden
 - Do not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and she gave it to Adam, and he ate it (Genesis 3:1-7).

God cursed Adam and Eve because of their disloyalty (Genesis chapter 3 verses 8 through 24).

“The Fall” – the events from the serpent’s temptation through God’s judgment when Adam and Eve’s sin caused humanity to fall out of God’s favor and blessings.

Consequences of the Fall (Genesis 3:16-19):

- Eve – pain in childbirth, strife in her relationship with Adam, death
- Adam – difficulty subduing and cultivating the earth, death

B. Individuals (8:17)

The curse on Adam and Eve applies to all their natural descendants — everyone except Jesus (Romans 5:12-19).

Adam’s one act of disobedience condemned all humanity because Adam was the covenant head of the human race.

We’re born already guilty of sin, enslaved to sin, and sentenced to death (1 Corinthians 15:22).

It was gracious for God to allow humanity to be judged in Adam since he:

- had a much greater ability to avoid sin than we do
- faced much less temptation
- wasn't born into a world where sin ran rampant
- wasn't subjected to sinful influences from other people
- walked and talked with God in the Garden
- had knowledge and experience of God that surpasses ours
- possessed great personal righteousness, being created completely without sin

If we were to face the same temptation Adam faced, we would fail even more miserably.

Everyone, without exception, needs forgiveness and cleansing from sin.

C. Authorship (15:00)

The authorship of human sin refers to who is ultimately to blame for it.

Adam and Eve tried to blame to someone else for their sin:

- Adam explicitly blamed Eve and implicitly blamed God who had created her (Genesis 3:12).
- Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:13).

God punished each one:

- the serpent – for deceiving the woman
- Eve – for being deceived, eating the fruit and misleading her husband
- Adam – for being misled and eating the fruit

The serpent was the ultimate author of sin because it was the first to come up with the idea to sin and the first to try to cause humanity to sin.

Adam and Eve freely chose to sin and, in this sense, authored human sin.

God isn't culpable or guilty of sin or of compelling anyone to sin (1 John 1:5).

God hates sin and can't be tempted by sin (Deuteronomy 25:16; Psalm 5:4; Zechariah 8:17; James 1:13).

Most theologians answer the question of sin in terms of the free will of God's creatures:

- God created the angels with enough liberty of will that they were able to choose between sinning and avoiding sin.
- After the angels fell, God created humanity and placed them in the Garden of Eden with sufficient liberty of will both to sin and not to sin.
- Satan took the form of a serpent and tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit.
- Both Eve and Adam knew God's command and freely chose to disobey him (Genesis 3:6).

God's purposes aren't always clear and his reasons for allowing sin into the world can be mysterious.

Ultimately, sin works to the benefit of believers, making it a useful part of his plan to bless us. (Romans 8:28).

III. Character (29:50)

Sin is generally what God prohibits, condemns or curses in Scripture.

A. Lawless (30:56)

Sin is fundamentally lawless.

The law's power to condemn us lies in its ability to identify our sinfulness (Romans 5:20):

- places obligations on us that weren't required before the law
- ignites our sinful passions by drawing attention to what it forbids

The law is good – a true reflection of God's character and the standard by which sin is measured (Romans 7:12).

Sin's lawlessness can be considered in terms of God's covenant relationship with humanity:

- Everything God approves and blesses is a requirement in his covenant law.
- Everything he condemns and curses is a prohibition in his covenant law.

Everything we do is either in obedience to God's covenant or in violation of its law (1 John 3:2-4).

Anything that's contrary to God's holy nature violates his law (James 2:10-11).

B. Unloving (37:16)

Sin is unloving toward God and toward other human beings.

Love for God and humanity indicates loyalty to our covenant obligations (obedience) and kindness toward others for the sake of the covenant.

Love is properly expressed as obedience only when the one we love has authority over us (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; Deuteronomy 6:5-6).

God wants his people to obey him because they:

- honor him
- are thankful for his benevolence
- are loyal to his covenant
- treasure him and his law in their hearts

God's love for his people and his people's love for him are described in terms of covenant faithfulness (Deuteronomy 7:9-13).

According to Jesus:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40).

Love for God and love for neighbor are not just two halves of the Law, but each summarizes the whole Law (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14).

Sin is fundamentally unloving:

- It shows that God isn't the foremost commitment of our hearts.
- It despises the reflection of God's character and authority in our neighbor.

Adam and Eve were unloving:

- toward God by rebelling against his covenant law and by trusting the serpent's lies over God's truth.
- toward each other by disrespecting God's image in each other and by failing to seek the other's good.

Every human sin is a rejection of God's truth, a distrust in his benevolence, and a rebellion against his authority.

IV. Consequences (48:06)

“Original sin” – The condition into which Adam's natural descendants are born as a result of Adam's fall into sin.

A. Corruption (50:11)

Humanity's relationship to sin:

- *posse non peccare* (“the ability not to sin”) – Adam and Eve's original sinless state
- *non posse non peccare* (“the inability not to sin”) – Adam and Eve's corruption removed their capacity to please God and to merit his blessings

The rest of the human race is now doomed to be born into a state of moral corruption — slaves to sin — (John 8:31-44; Romans 6:6-20, 8:6-8; Luke 6:43-45), until God saves us.

Every part of our human nature has been completely affected by sin:

- our bodies (Genesis 3:16-19)
- our minds (Romans 3:11)
- our hearts (1 John 2:16)

1. **Concepts (54:42)**

Sin has damaged our capacity for conceptual thought and caused us to believe that false ideas are true (Ecclesiastes 9:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Deuteronomy 29:2-4; John 8:43-47; Ephesians 4:17-18).

It's not sinful to misunderstand difficult concepts, but it *is* sinful to affirm false doctrine and unbiblical ways of thinking (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

2. **Behaviors (58:32)**

Adam and Eve's sin served as the model for all the behavioral sins that have plagued humanity since.

God has given fallen humanity over to its sinful appetites (Romans 1:29-32).

3. Emotions (1:03:17)

Sin prevents us from loving God and our neighbors as we should, and from manifesting other righteous emotions.

Every human being struggles with coveting, lust, pride, hatred, unrighteous anger, and other sinful emotions (Mark 7:21-22; James 1:14-15).

Apart from God's saving grace, we have no ability to please God.

B. Alienation (1:05:58)

God created humans to:

- rule over the world in fellowship with him.
- fill the whole earth so that all creation would become God's earthly kingdom.
- live as a united race, cooperatively and lovingly governing creation as God's vice-regents or vassal kings.

Sin broke our fellowship with God and damaged our relationships with each other (Genesis 4–6).

Adam and Eve's act of rebellion against God turned our entire race into God's enemies (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:10).

Christians continue to struggle to treat each other with love and compassion (James 4:1-2).

C. Death (1:12:58)

When Adam rebelled against God, all of humanity fell under the curse of death (Romans 5:12-17).

Adam died spiritually when he was cursed, and his natural descendants are spiritually dead before they come to faith (Ephesians 2:1-5).

We have spiritual life if Christ is in us, but if Christ is not in us we're spiritually dead (Romans 8:10).

V. Conclusion (1:18:38)

3. What does it mean when we speak of the “authorship” of human sin? Using specific biblical references, explain how Scripture teaches that God is not the ultimate author of humanity’s fall into sin.
4. Give a brief overview of Paul’s teaching about the role of the law in salvation. How is sin fundamentally lawless?

5. What is our primary expression of love for God? How does this help us see that sin, in essence, is unloving?

6. What is “original sin”? How does sin’s corruption affect our concepts, behaviors and emotions?

7. What was God's original intent for our relationship with him and with others?
How has sin alienated us from God and other human beings?

8. What does it mean to be spiritually dead? If we are all born into this world guilty of Adam's sin and sentenced to death, how can we escape sin's influence in the future?

Application Questions

1. How does sin affect your daily life? How does it affect your relationship with God?
2. When Adam and Eve first sinned, both tried to shift the blame for their actions onto others. According to Scripture, how should we respond when we've sinned? Why is this important?
3. What would you say to someone who asks how a loving God could allow sin and pain and death into the world?
4. Is it good that God gave mankind the freedom of will, or would we have been better off being unable to sin? Explain your answer.
5. How does God's law give us freedom? How does disobedience to God's law make us slaves to sin?
6. Jesus told us that the greatest commandment was to love God, and the second greatest commandment was to love others (Matthew 22:37-40). If sin is fundamentally unloving, how can we express love in practical ways to God and those around us?
7. Scripture tells us that unbelievers live "in the futility of their thinking" (Ephesians 4:17). How can evangelism be successful when unbelieving hearts and minds are darkened by sin?
8. Christians often continue to struggle with the same sins after we come to faith in Christ. What sins continue to challenge you in your walk with Christ? Where have you seen victory in your life over sin? How do you continue to strengthen your defenses against the temptation to sin?
9. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Augustine – (A.D. 354-430) Bishop of Hippo who believed in the Scriptures as our final authority in doctrine and considered the creeds of the church to be helpful summaries of scriptural teaching; wrote *Confessions* and *The City of God*

authorship – In reference to human sin, the person or source that is ultimately to blame

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

Fall, the – The events from the serpent’s temptation through God’s judgment when Adam and Eve’s sin caused humanity to fall out of God’s favor and blessings

non posse non peccare – Latin phrase meaning “the inability not to sin”; used by Augustine to describe humanity's condition after the Fall

original sin – The condition into which Adam’s natural descendants are born as a result of Adam’s fall into sin

posse non peccare – Latin phrase meaning “the ability not to sin”; used by Augustine to describe humanity's condition before the Fall and after the Holy Spirit has regenerated our souls

sin – Lawlessness; any lack of conformity to or violation of God’s law

Westminster Shorter Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647